CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system comprising:

a network;

an instant messaging (IM) server computer system coupled to the network, the IM server computer system comprising:

a collaborative shell program, and

an instant messaging (IM) server application coupled with the collaborative shell program;

at least one user computer system coupled to the network, the at least one user computer system comprising:

an instant messaging (IM) client application, and

a command line interface (CLI) shell program; and

at least one target computer system coupled to the network.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the at least one user computer system further comprises:

a processor;

an operating system;

an input device; and

a display.

3. A method comprising:

receiving text from a user computer system over a network;

determining whether the text includes a command; and

wherein upon a determination the text includes a command, sending the command to at least one target computer system, and

wherein upon a determination that the text does not include a command, sending the text to an instant messaging (IM) server application.

4. The method of Claim 3, further comprising:

receiving a response from the at least one target computer system; and

automatically sending the response to the user computer system.

5. A method comprising:

receiving text over a network from a user computer system, the text including one or more characters;

intercepting the text by a collaborative shell program;

determining whether a first character of the text is a predefined command character; and

upon a determination that the first character of the text is the predefined command character, sending the subsequent characters over the network to at least one target computer system.

6. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

wherein upon a determination that the first character of the text is not the predefined command character, sending the text to an instant messaging (IM) server application.

7. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

receiving a response from the at least one target computer system over the network; and

automatically sending the response over the network to the user computer system.

8. The method of Claim 5, wherein the predefined command character is a character not assigned a functionality by a command line interface (CLI) shell program utilized by the user computer system.

9. The method of Claim 5, wherein the predefined command character is an asterisk.

10. The method of Claim 5, wherein the subsequent characters are a command.

11. The method of Claim 7, wherein the response is sent as an instant message.

12. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

receiving a selection of the at least one target computer system from the user computer system over the network.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the selection of the at least one target computer system is input on a first graphical user interface displayed on the user computer system.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the first graphical user interface is a buddy list.

15. The method of Claim 13, wherein the first graphical user interface is displayed by an instant messaging (IM) client application on the user computer system.

16. The method of Claim 5, wherein the text is input to a second graphical user interface displayed on the user computer system.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the second graphical user interface is a chat window.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein the second graphical user interface is displayed by an instant messaging (IM) client application on the user computer system.

19. A method comprising:

establishing a session connecting one or more user computer systems and one or more target computer systems;

receiving text from at least one of the one or more user computer systems;

determining whether the text includes a command; and

upon a determination that the text includes the command, sending the command to at least one of the one or more target computer systems in the session.

20. The method of Claim 19, further comprising:

receiving a response over the network returned from the one or more target computer systems; and

automatically sending the response over the network to the one or more user computer systems in the session.

21. The method of Claim 19, wherein the determining whether the text includes a command comprises:

intercepting the text by a collaborative shell program;

determining whether a first character of the text is a predefined command character; and

upon a determination that the first character of the text is the predefined command character, determining the text includes a command.

22. A graphical user interface comprising:

at least one selectable identifier of a target computer system coupled to a network.

23. The graphical user interface of Claim 22, further comprising:

a status indicator associated with the at least one selectable identifier of a target computer system coupled to a network.

24. The graphical user interface of Claim 22, further comprising:

at least one selectable identifier of a program selected from the group consisting of a script, a bot, and an agent.

25. The graphical user interface of Claim 22, further comprising:

at least one selectable identifier of a user having access to the network.

26. A graphical user interface comprising:

at least one selectable identifier of a program selected from the group consisting of a script, a bot, and an agent.

27. The graphical user interface of Claim 26, further comprising:

a status indicator associated with the at least one selectable identifier of a program selected from the group consisting of a script, a bot, and an agent.

28. The graphical user interface of Claim 26, further comprising:

at least one selectable identifier of a user having access to a network.

29. The graphical user interface of Claim 26, further comprising:

at least one selectable identifier of a target computer system coupled to the network.

30. A method comprising:

receiving an event at an instant messaging (IM) server computer system on a network to open a session connection to an instant messaging (IM) client application on at least a first user computer system on the network;

opening a session connection to the IM client application on the at least a first user computer system;

starting a session;

receiving an event to open one or more additional connections within the session to one or more target computer systems on the network;

opening the one or more additional connections to each of the one or more target computer systems;

receiving text input from the at least a first user computer system and the one or more target computer systems;

intercepting the text at the IM server computer system by a collaborative shell program, wherein the text includes one or more characters;

determining whether the text includes a predefined command character;

upon a determination that the text includes the predefined command character, sending the remaining characters to the one or more target computer systems; and

upon a determination that the first character of the text is not the predefined command character, sending the text to an IM server application utilized by the IM server computer system.

31. The method of Claim 30, further comprising:

authenticating that a user of the at least a first user computer system has access rights to the one or more target computer systems on the network.

32. The method of Claim 30, further comprising:

receiving a response returned from the one or more target computer systems at the IM server computer system; and

automatically sending the response from the one or more target computer systems to the at least one user computer system.

33. A system comprising:

a network;

one or more target computer systems coupled to the network;

one or more user computer systems coupled to the network, each of the one or more user computer systems comprising:

an operating system,

a command line interface (CLI) shell program, the CLI shell program including a command line interface (CLI), and

an instant messaging (IM) client application; and

an instant messaging (IM) server computer system coupled to the network, the IM server computer system comprising:

an instant messaging (IM) server application, the IM server application including IM functionalities, and

a means for linking the command line interface (CLI) of the CLI shell program with the instant messaging (IM) functionalities of the IM server application.

34. The system of Claim 33, wherein the IM functionalities of the IM server application comprise:

instant messaging functionalities; and

chat functionalities.

35. The system of Claim 33, wherein the means for linking the command line interface of the CLI shell program with the IM functionalities of the IM server application comprises:

means for authenticating each of the one or more users on the one or more user computer systems to each of the one or more target computer systems over the network.

36. A method for monitoring status information over a network comprising:

periodically querying one or more target computer systems on a network for status information;

receiving the status information returned from the one or more target computer systems; and

providing a user at a user computer system on the network with an indication of the status of the one or more target computer systems in a graphical user

interface displayed on the user computer system by an instant messaging (IM) client application.

37. The method of Claim 36, wherein the indication of the status of the one or more target computer systems is provided by a status indicator displayed in the graphical user interface and associated with each of the one or more target computer systems.

38. A method for monitoring status information over a network comprising:

periodically querying at least one program selected from the group consisting of a script, a bot, and an agent for status information;

receiving the status information returned from the at least one program; and

providing a user at a user computer system on the network with an indication of the status of the at least one program in a graphical user interface displayed on the user computer system by an instant messaging (IM) client application.

39. The method of Claim 38, wherein the indication of the status of the at least one program is provided by a status indicator displayed in the graphical user interface and associated with the at least one program.